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ABSTRACT

This package of information from a teacher training workshop is designed to be used by English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers working with literacy students. Training objectives are for participants to identify the following: characteristics of adult ESL learners, the methods most effective in adult ESL literacy instruction, and strategies for classroom management. Participants are also taught to create a lesson plan for literacy students in a multilevel class. Also included are six literacy learner profiles. Handouts suitable for photocopying are also included. Four brief information sheets are also provided: "Reading Theory Made Simple"; "Multi-Level Lesson Plan Idea"; "Tips To Live by When Teaching ESL Literacy"; and "Self Access Materials for Literacy Students." (KFT) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education)

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VAILL-ESL 2000

Teaching Literacy Students in Your ESL Class

Presenter: Kate Singleton
Arlington Education and Employment Program
July 28, 2000

FL 801 457

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Training Objectives:

- Participants will identify characteristics of adult ESL literacy learners.
- Participants will identify methods thought to be most effective in adult ESL literacy instruction.
- Participants will identify strategies for classroom management helpful for literacy instruction in a multilevel ESL class.
- Participants will create a lesson plan for literacy students in a multilevel class.

Training Agenda:

1. **Getting acquainted -** Information grid activity to learn about other participants' backgrounds and concerns.
2. **Posting questions -** Questions which participants bring to the training will be identified. Questions which are not answered throughout the training will be addressed at the end.
3. **Literacy learner profiles -** Participants will analyze profiles to identify factors that affect a student's ability to learn and progress.
4. **Teacher and learner expectations -** Participants will discuss what are reasonable expectations for a teacher and a student to hold of student progress.
5. **Reading theory made simple -** Current ideas on the best approach for directing ESL adult literacy instruction will be introduced and discussed.
6. **Materials/Lesson planning -** Materials and activities for working with literacy students will be presented. Attention will be given to self-access materials, materials for volunteer-led groups and whole class activities which can reinforce literacy learning as well as build cohesion in a multilevel class. Participants will use this information to plan a lesson for such a class.
7. **Wind-up discussion/Evaluation -** Remaining questions will be addressed and workshop evaluations will be completed.

Training Agenda Item 3: Literacy Learner Profiles

Mebrat

Female, age 27

Native country, language: Ethiopia, Amharic

Years of education in native language: 3

Literate in native language: No

6 semesters in low beginner, first level; currently taking 2nd level of low beginner for the 2nd time

BESToral short form score: 2 (3/98)

Mebrat was painfully shy when she started ESL classes. She had joined her husband in the US a couple months previously, but had never set foot outside of their apartment without him. In her country she had stayed out of school while her siblings attended it, because her parents had chosen her to work in their store and do household chores.

At first Mebrat didn't seem very motivated to learn. She seemed to be in a fearful daze, unable to concentrate. It appeared that her husband had tutored her a little in the alphabet and sounds, but she feared speaking in a full voice around others, so it was difficult to assess what she knew. She worked with other literacy students and a volunteer on phonics and sight reading activities. She eventually progressed ahead of others in the group, but all interaction and practice appeared uncomfortable for her.

One day she announced that she had started a part-time job in a local pizza restaurant. From this point forward she began to come out of her shell. Her confidence grew, and she associated more with other students. Her speaking ability grew rapidly compared to her previous progress. Her reading continued to improve, although she tended to prefer to give up rather than use strategies to attack new words. She did ultimately decide she was ready to try the next level class, even though she knew the reading and writing would be a challenge for her. She is now repeating that class .

Compared to other students profiled, Mebrat had several personal advantages in studying literacy. Her husband was very supportive of her and tutored her when he had time. She had no children to care for, and was only working part-time. She was young and in good health. She had no prolonged absences, which is significant considering her passivity in the learning process.

Now Mebrat reports to a former teacher that she is very happy her life changed from when she was sitting at home alone afraid to speak to people. She feels much better now that she is working and making friends with her English skills. And she feels more confident now that her reading has improved.

Luz

Female, age 37

Native country, language: El Salvador, Spanish

Years of education in native language: 0

Literate in native language: No

5 semesters in low beginner, first level, dropped out for health and finance reasons

BESToral short form score: 0 (8/98)

Luz appeared extremely intimidated when she first came to school. She was very quiet in her first 3 months of class. She shyly whispered to the teacher once in Spanish that this was her first time in school and she was nervous but happy to try it. She occasionally repeated what the teacher said, but comprehended little. She had no exposure to English outside of the class to reinforce school learning. Also, she had no previous academic experience. She didn't know what was expected of her in the classroom. The teacher decided to let Luz get comfortable with repeating and watching what the other students were doing for a little while. In this time, her gentle, motherly personality helped her befriend other students and win their patience.

Outside of school, Luz was taking care of the 6 of her 7 children who live with her and her husband in their 2 bedroom apartment. On the weekends she worked two 13-hour days cleaning a local airport with other Spanish speaking people.

In Luz's second semester, she worked more with a volunteer and another very shy woman who was also learning to read. Luz tried to rely on repeating at first. She lagged behind the other student's progress. The teacher worked with her to see if she could remember names for letters of the alphabet. Luz could repeat a series of 7 letters one time, but would then would forget them all. The teacher wondered if Luz had a learning disability that was impairing her short term memory, but decided to keep working at the alphabet with her to see if Luz's memory would improve. Eventually, with persistent effort, Luz did start to retain information a little longer. It appeared that her short-term memory for academic applications was a new tool for her, and she needed time and practice to develop it. She began to ask some of her school-aged children for help also.

Over the next 3 semesters, Luz worked closely with the same volunteer two nights a week in small groups. Fortunately for Luz, at that time her class consistently had 3-4 other literacy learners, coincidentally all women, so she had company, and at times could take the lead in their group activities. Also fortunately, the other group members didn't speak Spanish, so she was forced to try harder to communicate orally. During this time she was given a scholarship by the school which made her continued study possible.

Luz's confidence and memory capacity started to bloom over these three semesters. She was starting to recognize high frequency words in LEA's she worked on. Her vocabulary for things that stimulated her interest like health, food, and clothing was growing. Word attack skills were finally beginning to stick. She appeared very happy to come to class every day, and happier still to be learning what her children were learning in school.

Midway through Luz's 5th semester, she began to complain of severe abdominal pains. Uninsured, she went to the emergency room and found she had a large uterine fibroid that had to be removed. She did not understand the condition or body parts involved, and grew terrified as the surgery date approached. A mistake was made during her surgery and another organ was cut accidentally. She faced a long recuperation, consequent unemployment and large hospital bills. She has not returned to school in the 9 months since the surgery.

Aziz

Male, age 50

Native country, language: Pakistan, Urdu

Years of education in native language: 9

Literate in native language: low level functioning

3 semesters in low level beginner class, 3 semesters in high level beginner class

BESToral short form score: 29 (7/98)

When Aziz first tested into the ESL program, he was placed in a high beginner/low intermediate class because of his high oral skills. However, after one evening in the class Aziz explained to the teacher that he wanted to be placed in the very lowest beginner class. The teacher pointed out that he would probably be bored with the speaking activities in the class. Aziz persisted, and his request was granted.

In the level 1 low beginner class, Aziz started learning the English alphabet and letter/sound correlations. He concurrently began sight reading activities with the Personal Stories reader series. The teacher recommended that, because his high oral abilities would support his learning to read, he apply for a literacy tutor with a local literacy organization. In a month that organization gave him a tutor with whom he is very compatible. Since that time they have met 1 or 2 times a week. Their work outside of class hastened Aziz's familiarization with the alphabet and phonics.

In class, when a volunteer was available they worked as a pair. Otherwise, Aziz laboriously copied any written work the other students were doing. He attempted and sometimes completed more simple reading and writing assignments. He also helped the other students with oral work, which freed the teacher to give him extra attention. In general, he was very accepting of standing out in the class, so long as he could improve his reading.

As his reading skills developed, Aziz's oral skills served him well. In the lower level beginner class, he worked through 2 levels of Personal Stories. However, sometimes his oral skills stood in his way. When attacking new words, he tended to guess what the words were rather than decoding them. While prediction is a necessary skill in learning to read, he sometimes relied on it too much.

Outside of school, Aziz works 12 hour days as a manager of a restaurant in Georgetown. The owner thought very highly of him and gave him a lot of responsibilities. His progress with this job established for Aziz a history of success in this country which made him proud and helped him have the courage and confidence to go to school. He is married with 2 sons, and his wife takes care of all domestic concerns. Possibly the fact that he is originally from a male-dominated culture added to his self-esteem in school.

Aziz decided that he was ready to try a higher level after 3 semesters at low beginner, first level. He went to high beginner for 2 semesters, but felt there was not enough concentration on reading and writing to continue putting time into classes. He continues to meet with his literacy tutor. He recently reported to a former teacher that he had just bought his first house.

Zina

Female, age 40

Native country, language: Morocco, Arabic

Years of education in native language: 0

Literate in native language: No

1 semester in low beginner, first level; dropped out for health, finance and transportation reasons

BEST oral short form score: 5 (10/99)

Zina came to school for the first time in her life when she started ESL classes. From the first day, she appeared happy to be there. She shared her strong sense of humor with her classmates and befriended others quickly.

Zina paid very close attention to the teacher in the lessons. Although it wasn't evident in her BEST score, she understood a lot and could express basic information about herself. When a volunteer was available, Zina worked with her on sound/letter correlations, basic LEA's and sight reading. Other times Zina worked on copying and matching handouts independently while the rest of the class did reading and writing assignments. She fully participated in conversational activities with the whole class. Zina told the teacher that she regularly went over all of her papers from class with her high school-aged daughter at home. In class, she befriended an Arabic speaker whose goal is to become an English teacher in the future. This student helped Zina with reading and writing considerably when a teacher or volunteer was not available.

Zina worked full-time as a hotel housekeeper. She was married and cared for several children.

Just as Zina was beginning to get a grasp on sound/letter correlations (and appeared very pleased with her progress), she had an accident. She slipped in the snow and broke her leg. No one was available to drive her to school, so she dropped out. She could not continue with her job, so she became housebound. She has not returned to school in the 8 months since the accident.

Selma

Female, age 38

Native country, language: Egypt, Arabic

Years of education in native language: 0

Literate in native language: No

2 semesters in low beginner, 2 semesters in high beginner

BEST oral short form score: 30

Selma had been in the US for 8 years when she first came to classes. In that 8 years she had developed high oral skills, and some familiarity with the alphabet and sound/letter correlation, probably in a one-on-one, literacy tutoring situation. Now her employer had agreed to pay for her lessons, so she was trying school for the first time. She explained to her teacher that she only wanted to work on reading and writing, and the teacher agreed that if a volunteer was available on the days Selma was present, she and the volunteer could do extensive reading practice together. Selma appeared very earnest in her desire to improve her literacy skills. At one point she started crying as she told the story of how her son's pre-school teacher got mad that Selma wasn't reading him a story every night.

From the start of classes attendance was a problem for Selma. She never attended more than 40 hours of a 120 hour class. Occasionally she made it to school 2 out of 4 times in one week, but rarely.

Volunteers that worked with her were frustrated. They liked her, and saw that she was very intelligent, but the discontinuity between lessons impeded her progress. On top of this factor, they reported that she was impatient with her own progress, and relied on guessing words rather than using word attack skills.

Selma worked full-time as a hotel housekeeper. She was also raising a pre-schooler by herself. Her husband had abandoned her when she was pregnant. She had been unable to get a drivers license because she couldn't read the test, so she relied on buses for transportation between daycare, work and school. In short, she was exhausted by her work and home responsibilities, and she had no energy left to study.

Selma did not enroll for the most recent semester. She did, however, report to her former teacher that she had passed the written driving test after several tries with the help of a translator.

Fatima

Female, age 29

Native country, language: Morocco, Arabic

Years of education in native language: 5?

Literate in native language: No

Low Beginner class, first level; currently taking the class for the 5th time

BEST oral short form score: 17 (1/99 - not at onset of studies)

Prior to starting in ESL classes, Fatima had had a tutor with a local literacy organization. When she started classes, she could write English capital letters and remember names and sounds for some of them, though not 100% consistently. She could greet people in English, but was very timid, so it was difficult to determine if she could say anything more in English. In general, her personality was gentle, but under confident and unassertive.

When she started classes, Fatima was working full-time as a cook and housekeeper for Arabic-speaking diplomatic families. Her work often left her exhausted by the evening class time. More recently, she has begun work for the American-born wife of an Arabic-speaking diplomat. This has greatly accelerated her acquisition of oral skills and confidence, but the rigorous schedule has caused her to have more absences.

Prior to her current job, Fatima made a strong effort to come to class regularly. She frequently became sick, however, so her momentum was often interrupted. She has mentioned that she wants a baby very much, and is embarking on fertility treatments. It is possible that this situation makes her feel stigmatized in school, especially as fertility is an important issue among most female students in her classes.

In general, Fatima's reading has progressed. She has worked through a beginning level literacy reader in a small group of students aided by a volunteer. She is much more consistently able to use phonics to attack new words, and her comprehension of texts is more consistent. She is now able to assess and express some of her needs regarding literacy - she recently requested extra work on differentiating lower case letters. Her motivation comes and goes, seemingly in correlation to work fatigue and health problems. She has decided, since she no longer qualifies for scholarships in the ESL program, that she wants to pay for classes herself.

Ask the questions to other workshop participants. Write their answers in the boxes.

Name	In what capacity have you worked with ESL literacy students? E.g. teacher, volunteer, tutor, class, one-on-one	How many literacy students have you worked with?	What is your biggest frustration in teaching ESL literacy?

Reading Theory: Pre-reading Questions

Discuss the following questions in your group.

1. How long can humans hold items in short-term memory?

2. What is chunking?

3. What does a good native-language reader do when reading?

4. What is the best way to teach reading to adult literacy learners? Phonics-based approach? Sight reading? Whole language approach? Why?

5. What are considerations for teaching literacy students who are not literate vs. students who can read in their native language?

Reading Theory Made Simple

There has been much debate over time as to where to begin when teaching adult literacy. Some people feel that it is important to give students a base in phonics before moving on to comprehending sentences. Others prefer sight reading and whole language approaches. They feel that a phonics-based approach does not represent the way "good readers" read and delays acquisition of true reading skills. Current thinking in ESL adult literacy is that a blend of all three approaches is the most efficient for our students.

While phonics is necessary for decoding new words, it is believed to be inefficient as a basic approach for several reasons. First of all, phonetic decoding is time-consuming, and the time it takes goes against the functioning of human short-term memory. **Short-term memory (STM)** is the working part of human memory that briefly stores and processes information taken in by our senses. It can hold between 5 and 10 items at one time, and the information disappears from STM in 15-20 seconds if it is not repeated. If a beginning ESL literacy student is trying to sound out the sentence, "How much does the chicken cost?," she will be hard-pressed to remember what she read at the beginning of the sentence by the time she reads the end, let alone extracting meaning from the sentence as a whole. To compensate for this brevity of retention in STM, human beings do a lot of **chunking**, or grouping information into units of meaning that help STM handle more information at a time. When a reader learns to recognize words as a whole, she can remember more about what she is reading than when she is proceeding sound by sound.

As literacy teachers, we want to help our students develop skills as close to those of a good native language reader as we can. What are those skills? A good native language reader makes **predictions**. He predicts what a whole word is based on the sounds of the first couple letters. He predicts what the next word will be based the preceding context. He predicts what the rest of a paragraph will be about based on the first sentence. He uses pictures, captions, titles and format to predict the nature of a text.

How can ESL literacy teachers move their students toward this kind of reading ability? Since the student has little to work with in the way of vocabulary, the teacher can help by making the topic relevant to the student's life and interests. Oral work can precede reading work to help build vocabulary for reading. **Phonics** work can be done using vocabulary relevant to the selected topic to give the student ways to attack new words. **Sight reading** (learning to recognize a whole word by sight, as if the word is a picture rather than a series of sounds) can be done to help the student quickly identify and retain high frequency and important words. **Whole language** (keeping authentic language intact and practicing it as a whole) can be used to give life and context to reading. A combination of these approaches will bring the student to a more rapid realization of how to read and what she can get out of reading personally.

The above is synthesized from information in:

A Handbook for ESL Literacy, J. Bell, B. Burnaby (Toronto: Oise Press, 1993)

Psychology: An Introduction, C. Morris, A. Maisto (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents, 1998)

What Non-Readers or Beginning Readers Need to Know, S. Brod (Denver: Spring Institute, 1999)

Multi-level Lesson Idea

Topic: Identifying foods, meals

Whole group presentation. Bring in food realia from home. Elicit names that students know, then drill students on names. Use names in Q+A w/group, e.g. Do you like _____? Do you eat ____ for breakfast/ lunch/ dinner? Do you drink _____? Have group practice short answers.

Practice: Information grid - Literate students can do a grid practicing all questions covered. Literacy students can ask questions of whole class from a simplified grid. (See example.)

Literate students can do reading and writing practice from a text (e.g. Survival English or Take Charge units on food).

At the same time, **literacy students** can work with teacher or volunteer with flash cards of a small group of selected foods. They can practice naming the pictures correctly. Then the teacher (T)/volunteer (V) can show them flashcards of the names, have them repeat a few times, and have them place the names next to the correct picture. The T/V can drill the names until the students start to get them consistently. Then the T/V can take the pictures away and drill the names again, stressing initial consonants to help with recognition. The T/V can ask students, "Where is the potato?" and students must locate the word. Do this with all words until there is some familiarity. Move on to matching pictures and words. Have students copy words and pictures, or write names on a handout of pictures.

In the **following class**, **oral review** of foods can be done as a **whole group**. **More oral work** can be **presented** on shopping for food, e.g. asking for prices. The class could work as a whole to "play store," with students role-playing cashier and shoppers.

Literate students could branch off to work on more complex oral work or reading and writing work on the subject matter.

Literacy students could work w/ T/V to review flashcards from previous lesson. Then they could talk about likes and dislikes. The T/V could write student-generated sentences on sentence strips, e.g. Luz likes broccoli. Mebrat doesn't like pizza. The T/V could guide students in reading the sentences. They can work up to sight reading the sentences individually. They can copy the sentences in their notebook, with T/V checking for accuracy. Then the T/V can cut a sentence into words and have the students resequence them. Do this for all sentences. Then the T/V can put all words together and mix them up on the table top. The T/V says a word and the students try to find it. Then the T/V can put the words together and use them as flashcards for the students to identify. Finish up by rereading original sentences.

The **following day** no volunteer is available. The T can start by asking the class **list all the words** for food they know **that begin with a certain letter**. Literate students can be asked to spell words for literacy students. Have students write a word on the board. Drill pronunciation with whole group.

Then the T can work with the **whole class** to **elicit an LEA story** from Picture Stories, p.13. Be sure to ask the literacy students for contributions to the story. After the story is elicited, the teacher can read it as students listen, with the T pointing to words as she reads. Then the class can read chorally. Next students can come up and read. Then students can come up and find words the T calls out. As students copy the story, the T can copy it onto sentence strips. She can go over the strips with the class, then distribute them, making sure all students know their sentence. Students come to the front and resequence. They say their sentences in order to see if it is correct. Next, the T takes a sentence strip and cuts it into words. She distributes words to individual students, making sure they know their word. Then students come up and resequence. Repeat with other sentences. Gradually students will get faster and more confident at resequencing. If time remains, students can try to retell the story orally.

Do you like _____?

Name	potatoes	meat	salad	ice cream
Jose	Yes	Yes	No	No

Tips to Live by When Teaching ESL Literacy

1. **Keep materials relevant to the literacy student's interests and needs.** The student's time, energy concentration are limited. For those who have no literacy in their native language, concentration in the classroom is new and difficult, and is best maintained by connecting classroom learning with their life experiences. These student need tangible results, or they will lose motivation and drop out.

2. **It's a long and winding road.** For adult ESL students, the process of gaining literacy is far from fast or linear. It's bad enough that developing reading skills is just plain difficult for adults, but for these students work and home stresses, rigorous schedules, health problems, the unfamiliarity of school, and exhaustion intensify the difficulty. Many literacy students have irregular attendance. Many who attend regularly are so tired that their memory and concentration are temporarily reduced. As a teacher, it is helpful to accept that these factors exist, and work with the student where they are on a given day. You may want to build today's lesson on yesterday's and plod forward toward literacy, but the student might need to take two steps back. As long as the student is willing to come to school and keep trying, whatever they can do is worthwhile.

3. **Connect with your literacy students.** Non-literate students tend to enter class with low-self esteem and much anxiety about the learning before them. The teacher's show of interest and confidence in the students' abilities can help reduce these obstacles. Information the teacher learns about a student can be used to help draw the student into a topic or activity. The teacher can use special talents of the student (e.g. drawing, music, cooking) to include them in conversations and activities with other students. If literacy students spend a lot of time working with a volunteer, it is still important for the teacher to visit the group regularly, ask questions and show interest, so that the literacy students will not feel cast aside because of their difference. It is also important for the volunteer and teacher to regularly exchange information about the students, not just so the teacher is aware of their progress, but so both teacher and volunteer can have information which may help keep students interested and tuned in.

4. **Repetition is good.** Sometimes as teachers we feel that we may overdo repetition, that students may find it babyish. However, with literacy students (and beginning students in general) it can be invaluable. Repetition can refer to repeating of new target language one day, repeating the same material from one day to the next, or repeating the level itself. While a teacher might feel frustrated to have the same student for 3 semesters in a row, sometimes that is just what the literacy student needs for things to click.

5. **Variety is good.** It is important that ESL literacy instruction is geared to a variety of learning styles. Presenting materials orally, pictorially, in writing, and with realia will give the confused literacy learner more chances to grasp material. Some students may feel more competent when kinesthetics, art or music are involved in an activity.

6. **Ask the student.** When making decisions about what to teach, ask the literacy student what they want. When making decisions about promotion and retention, ask the student if s/he is ready. The students are adults and can give valuable input. Sometimes it is necessary to send a letter home with them asking for a family member to drop by and do some translating to get this information. Usually there is a willing family member and the information gained is worth the extra work.

7. **Spoken first, then written.** Oral practice is a very important part of learning literacy for adult ESL students. Unlike students learning literacy in their native language, ESL literacy students don't have vocabulary on which to base predictions and find meaning in their reading. Oral work serves to provide them with this essential vocabulary, as well as strengthening their rapport with literate students in your class.

8. **Get a volunteer!** It borders on essential to have a competent volunteer available to work one-on-one or in small groups with literacy students so the students get the attention they need to make visible progress in your class. Volunteers need to be patient, encouraging, and open to learning how to teach literacy. The teacher should have regular communication with the volunteer about student progress. The teacher also needs to give the volunteer an opportunity to vent stress about apparent lack of progress. Unsupported literacy volunteers

can reach burn-out quickly, which can add to student and teacher frustration.

9. **Native language literate students.** Students who can read in their own language generally, though not always, can work more independently with ESL literacy materials than non-literate students. Their progress tends to be faster because of the reading skills like awareness of sound/letter correlation and prediction that transfer from their native language. Selection of materials should be handled carefully, because some materials that are appropriately simple for non-literate students may be found babyish by students who read in their own language.

10. **Peace of mind.** For the literacy student who is trying to develop previously underused mental muscles of short term memory and concentration, it is especially important to have a quiet, structured situation in which to practice pre-reading and reading activities. This need is heightened if a student has a learning disability. This situation is hard to create in a multi-level classroom - try to find a quiet room in which your volunteer can work with literacy students.

11. **Muddling-through time.** Sometimes a new literacy student, especially one with scant native-language academic experience, needs some time to get their bearings. Perhaps in their first semester they need to watch, mimic and sort out their perceptions. You may think some of your literacy students are hopeless cases by the end of their first semester, only to find out they return in the second semester with new signs of resolve and engagement. Sometimes the best thing a teacher can do is give the student time and space.

12. **The cup-half-full approach.** Teacher's expectations can play a big part in how s/he feels about the literacy learner's progress and potential for success. Sometimes it is easy to be intimidated by the task of teaching adult second-language literacy, and it is easy to perceive the student as sad, deprived, or disabled in contrast to others. The teacher's frustration is likely to be felt by the student. If the teacher can look at the student's willingness to come to school as an indication that the student is open to facing a difficult task to increase their life opportunities, the outcome will probably be more positive.

13. **Health issues.** There is a high occurrence of health problems among literacy students, perhaps due to lack of access to information on available low-income health services. Many times lingering problems that are overlooked become trips to the emergency room, and unmanageable hospital bills force the student to drop out of class. One thing a teacher can do is provide phone numbers for free or low-cost medical services early on in the class.

14. **Sometimes it's just not going to happen.** While teachers assume that any student who has come to our classroom wants to learn, that is not always the case. Occasionally a literacy student will come to your class not because they want reading in their life, but because their family, employer or social worker is pressuring them. If the student is not personally motivated to become a reader, learning is not likely to occur, in spite of a teacher's and volunteer's best efforts.

15. **What's the goal?** What do we hope to see as the result of our teaching efforts with an ESL literacy student? Will we ultimately see a strong reader emerge from our classroom with a novel tucked under his or her arm? Not likely, due to the time it takes to develop reading skills and the distractions our students face along the way. However, in their developing reading skills they have a new survival tool. We can hope to see people who feel more competent, more connected to the community and more positive about their own options and potential. Literacy students who have had a positive experience in ESL classes learn that school is there when they need it and they can come back and learn more.

Self-Access Materials for Literacy Students

or What to do on Those Days You Don't Have a Volunteer

One of the most difficult challenges facing a teacher of literacy students in a multi-level class is finding productive activities for the literacy students that don't require constant teacher direction. Volunteers are not always available to lead a literacy group or help the teacher monitor the literacy students' work. Additionally, it is beneficial for the literacy student to develop independence in the classroom that might help him/her feel successful and consequently dare to apply their learning independently elsewhere. Below are some recommendations for activities that may meet teacher and student needs. Notice that in most cases it is necessary to have practiced the material with guidance prior to the self-access work.

1. **Copying** - Yes, this can be a productive use of time if not overused! Much practice is needed to refine muscle control involved in holding a pencil and forming letters. Students could copy newly practiced vocabulary, flash cards with pictures and names, or sentences they had previously generated from their own experiences. Not only is letter formation a challenge, but the literacy student also needs to practice separating words in a sentence, and separating sentences with punctuation and capital letters.

2. **Word completion handouts** - Students can fill in missing letters of previously practiced words. For very beginning literacy students, the complete words can precede the incomplete words to serve as a model to copy.

3. **Matching card sets** - Students can use the kinesthetic approach as they match word and picture cards of previously practiced vocabulary. If a higher level student finishes their assignment early, they could check to see if the matching is accurate, then ask a simple question using the target vocabulary. E.g. If the target vocabulary items are names of food, the "teaching" student could go through the cards asking "Do you eat broccoli?," "Do you eat meat?," "Do you eat rice?," etc. The literacy student could practice answering, "Yes, I do," or "No, I don't." Literacy students can also benefit from repeated practice of matching upper case letter cards with lower case letter cards.

4. **Sequencing** - Students can try sequencing cards with letters of the alphabet. They can put word cards in order for sentences they have previously practiced. Again, sentences they have generated about their own experience serve well to maintain interest and spark memory. At the most basic level, they can have the completed sentence available as a model. At a more advanced level, they can sequence whole sentences from an LEA story.

5. **Keeping a dictionary** - After a teacher has helped students set up a dictionary by writing a letter of the alphabet on the top of each page in a notebook, students can look through the words they study every day to add words to the correct page in the notebook. (A teacher or volunteer will need to review the words in the dictionary with students regularly so students retain what they have written.)

6. **Language Master Cards** - Language Master cards are cards with a magnetic strip at the bottom which you can slide through a Language Master machine to record a vocabulary word or sentence. At the top of the card there is room for a picture to accompany the vocabulary. The machine allows students to listen to the word, then to record themselves saying the word. Once students are shown how to use the machine, they can use it independently.

What other self-access activities can you think of?